

# **National Marine Sanctuary Program National Update on Programs and Projects August 2003**

## **Core Operations**

### **Infrastructure**

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) has received Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) funding from Congress in fiscal years 2000 through 2003, totaling approximately \$30 million, and the President's Request for fiscal year 2004 includes another \$10 million in PAC funds. A status report on the use of these PAC funds entitled "National Marine Sanctuary Program Status of Facilities" was prepared by our primary facilities consultants, Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH), located in Arlington, Virginia, in April, 2003, and is available at:

<http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/library/facilities.html>

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Approximately \$10 million has been awarded (per Congressional directives, or "earmarks") to The Mariners' Museum in Hampton Roads, Virginia for the construction of the *USS Monitor* Center which includes office space for the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary and the Maritime Archaeological Center, large curation facilities to handle the recently retrieved *USS Monitor* artifacts (including the turret, engine, propeller and shaft), and a new facility for the display and interpretation of the artifacts. Approximately \$8.4 million has been budgeted to build the Dr. Nancy Foster Marine Learning Center in Key West, Florida, which will include a renovated former Navy warehouse to serve as a visitor center, new administrative office space, and a new dock and boat maintenance facility for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The dock was recently completed, but the renovation work and construction of the new buildings is scheduled to begin this fall, and take approximately 1 1/2 years to complete. Approximately \$1.2 million has been allocated to date for the design and part of the construction of a new multipurpose facility in Kihei, Maui for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary; the total cost is anticipated to be in the \$2.5 to \$3.0 million range. To date, a conceptual design and environmental assessment for the facility have been completed, and public hearings on the proposed project conducted. A major renovation of the former U.S. Coast Guard facility in Scituate, Massachusetts, which houses the staff of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, is underway (total cost is estimated to be in the range of \$1.5 million).

PAC funds are being used to develop and implement plans for placing identification and directional signs at our facilities (approximately 35 identification signs have been designed and are under production). PAC funds are also being used to develop and

implement a national exhibits plan. These national signage and exhibits plans will help the NMSP “brand” its whale tail logo, ensure that there are common visual themes evident throughout all the sites, ensure effective coordination among the sites, and help us provide a wise and efficient allocation of PAC funding to specific project proposals. These projects were recently tasked to Booz Allen Hamilton and the early results will become evident to advisory council members over the next few months.

### **International Projects**

Dan Basta has approved the creation of a more formal framework for the coordination of international activities for the NMSP. A team of Sanctuary personnel has been charged with the development of an inventory of recent and ongoing international projects, the development of a five-year strategic plan for international activities, identification of new international opportunities, and preparation of an annual accomplishments report for international activities. Liz Moore will serve as the NMSP’s International Activities Coordinator and Team Lead for the International Activities Team. Other team members will be announced shortly. The NMSP currently has ongoing projects with South Korea, Vietnam, Belize, Mexico, Canada, and potential projects with Thailand and Italy. In nearly all cases, travel for NMSP staff associated with these projects has been covered by the host country or other external funding. Also, the NMSP will be represented at the World Parks Congress in South Africa; the proposed delegates from the program are under review by NOAA.

### **National Marine Sanctuaries Act Reauthorization**

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act is reauthorized every four or five years, the last time being in 2000 and the next due in 2005. Identification of issues that the Program may wish addressed in this reauthorization and preparation of a draft Administration bill are underway. The NMSP will soon put out a call to all the Councils to ask for their input.

### **Program Evaluation**

The NMSP is engaged in an effort to develop both site and national performance assessment criteria. Performance measures for the sites are being developed as the management plan for each sanctuary is reviewed and updated. Performance criteria for the NMSP as a whole are also being developed in the form of a national “report card.” Using a five-tiered scoring system, the report card will inform the NMSP Director on programmatic effectiveness in a wide variety of management categories. The report card is currently going through final edits and is expected to be in use by the beginning of FY04 (October 2003).

### **Conservation Planning**

#### **Policy Development**

The NMSP is in the process of developing national policies on artificial reefs, marine zoning, submarine cables, marine wildlife interactions, and aquaculture. These policies are intended to (1) describe the NMSP decision-making process for certain activities such

as the establishment of marine reserves and other types of zones, (2) guide the NMSP in its endeavors to educate the public on the appropriateness of certain activities such as fish feeding in sanctuaries, and/or (3) provide NMSP permit guidelines for reviewing permit applications for activities such as artificial reefs and submarine cables. These NMSP policies will receive wide formal review, including a notice for public comment in the Federal Register, and close coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service and other appropriate agencies. At the present time, an interim final policy on artificial reefs has been published for public comment; the 60-day comment period closes September 16. The draft marine zoning policy is in final internal NOAA review, and should publish for public comment sometime in the late summer or early fall. Draft policies on cables and marine wildlife interaction are in NMSP development; NOAA clearance is expected to begin this fall. A draft policy on aquaculture is in the early stages of NMSP development.

### **Management Plan Review**

Management plan reviews continue to be one of the top priorities for the NMSP. The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary completed its five-year review in October 2002. Reviews are ongoing at the Channel Islands and Gray's Reef Sanctuaries, with draft management plans expected from those sites later in FY03. Florida Keys and Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary reviews are on-going. A joint management plan review encompassing the Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay Sanctuaries are focusing on preparing action plans for the remainder of this fiscal year. As with other management plan reviews, this effort is being conducted by a closely coordinated team of field and headquarters staff, and is further supported by additional personnel and projects from other parts of the National Ocean Service (NOS), including an extensive project to characterize the biogeography of the central California region. Other NOS assets have been brought to bear in the ongoing designation process to consider a sanctuary in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

### **Sanctuary Advisory Councils**

The NMSP continues to increase its support of and dedication to its 11 advisory councils. Thunder Bay will host a weeklong training session for council coordinators October 20-25, 2003. Gray's Reef will host the 2004 Advisory Council Chair and Coordinators Meeting February 23-27, 2004. Monthly bulletins and bi-annual updates are informing our council members about activities and projects across the program. In October Karen Brubeck and Aida Pettegrue will complete a transition with Elizabeth Moore. Karen will take over as National Advisory Council Coordinator; Aida will provide invaluable administrative, planning, and on-the-ground support to the councils on such key issues as Federal Register notices and member clearance. Liz will begin coordinating international projects, and continue work on management plans. The NMSP took another step towards sharing our council expertise internationally when Karen traveled to Australia for a staff exchange with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (trip report forthcoming).

## **Conservation Science**

### **Research**

The NMSP organized and facilitated a workshop on science needs for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). Over 100 participants identified priority issues of concern, information and science needs, and strategies across nine broad topic areas related to the long-term conservation and protection of natural resource and cultural legacy of the NWHI. The workshop was the first step in the development of a regional research plan for the NWHI.

### **Monitoring**

In addition to continued monitoring at many individual sanctuaries, several activities related to the implementation of a System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWiM) for the NMSP were conducted. In cooperation with the National Ocean Data Center (NODC) and the Sanctuary Integrated Monitoring Network (SIMoN) in the Monterey Bay region, the NMSP is working to develop the infrastructure and operating procedures for an information management system to support SWiM for the program. Significant activities are taking place with regard to data submission, quality assurance, analysis, and reporting. Once completed, the system will support sanctuaries throughout the system. In addition, a plan was completed for the development of a coordinated monitoring program for the three contiguous sanctuaries on the west coast – Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay. A workshop was also held at Gray’s Reef NMS to develop recommendations for improved protocols for reef and pelagic fish monitoring at that site. Finally, a monitoring program for invasive species along the west coast was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation at the level of \$188K. It is a cooperative project involving the NMSP, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program.

### **Characterization**

A wide variety of site-focused field efforts continue to provide critical characterization information to individual sanctuaries, including work funded by the NMSP (at over \$700,000 for FY03) and conducted by the NOS’s National Center for Coastal and Ocean Science. Project solicitation, evaluation, and selection for FY04 was also completed, though notifications have not yet been made to Principal Investigators. Current plans are to spend \$800K in NMSP funds in FY04 on this cooperative program.

## **Outreach, Education, and Media Relations**

### **Education**

The National Education Team is in the midst of an extremely busy summer season conducting educational programs such as an at-sea research and education cruise for high school students on board tall ship “Lady Washington” off the Olympic Coast to EnvironDiscovery Camps and Ocean Fest in Fagatele Bay. The Education Team had an

outstanding showing at the 2003 National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) annual conference in July and is pleased to announce that the Sanctuary Program will co-sponsor the 2005 NMEA conference. The Education Team is eagerly planning for its upcoming annual education coordinators meeting in February 2004 where, for the first time ever, it will host a marine science research and education conference in Hawaii for local scientists and educators.

### **Partnership**

The NMSP is negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) that will greatly enhance complementary outreach and educational capabilities. Under this agreement, the AZA and the NMSP would agree to work together to convey to the public a link between biological, economic, aesthetic, cultural, and other values of national marine sanctuaries to the quality of life for the American people. This strategic partnership will allow the NMSP to leverage AZA institutions such as major aquaria and zoos to increase the overall visibility of the program, and its ability to educate the American public.

### **National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) is supporting a variety of projects at the national and site level in 2003. The Foundation is developing partnerships with the Walt Disney Corporation, National Aquarium, and the Marine Fish Stewardship Council. At the site level, the Foundation will be supporting events to increase local community support and public visibility of the sites. Examples include the Thunder Bay Tall Ships Festival, Outrigger Hotels at Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale, Senator Breaux tribute dinner at Flower Garden Banks, MERITO (multi-cultural education) program at Monterey Bay, and a pollution study at Fagatele Bay.

The NMSP and the NMSF hosted the Capitol Hill Oceans Week in honor of June 8th Oceans Day. A series of ocean-related sessions were conducted for three days on the Hill and there was significant attendance by several Members of Congress (Sen. Fritz Hollings, Rep. Jim Saxton, Rep. Lois Capps, Sen. Sam Farr, Rep. Billy Tauzin, Rep. Neil Abercrombie, Thomas Allen, Curt Weldon), leaders representing ocean industries and interests such as Admiral James D. Watkins, USN (Ret.), Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy; Dr. Shirley Pomponi, Jean-Michel Cousteau, NMS Foundation Trustee and President of Ocean Future Society; Dr. Sylvia Earle, NMS Foundation Trustee and National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence; Dr. Shirley Pomponi, Vice President, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution; Tom Fry, National Ocean Industries Association; and, Terry Garcia, Vice President of Missions Program, National Geographic Society.

Sen. Fritz Hollings (D-S.C.), and Rep. Jim Saxton (R-N.J.) received the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's Leadership Award on June 10 at an event at the Ronald Reagan Building. Actress, model and amateur diver Lauren Hutton served as master of ceremonies. Dan Basta, director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program served as the emcee. The Foundation presented the first-ever Volunteer of the Year Award to two gentlemen: Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary Beach Watch volunteer Gordon Bennett was

selected because he contributed 2,000 hours annually monitoring beaches, assists with oil spill response and investigating human impacts on wildlife. Olympic Coast volunteer Alan Brooks was honored for serving as the Chairman of the Sanctuary's Advisory Council for over 2 years dedicating countless hours guiding the Council in advising the Sanctuary on tribal issues and public concerns.

### **Telepresence Programs**

The NMSP's Telepresence Project, which uses interactive technology to support a variety of informal learning environments, made major moves forward with planning and implementation over the last few months. A series of telepresence "stakeholder" meetings were held during March in the Channel Islands, Florida Keys, and Monterey Bay sanctuaries to discuss messaging, prospective uses, partner involvement, and technical installation alternatives. These meetings were successful in educating the sites about how this technology can enable planned and existing education and outreach initiatives at both the site and national level. In April, the major telepresence partners (NMSP, the JASON Foundation for Education, Mystic Aquarium/Institute for Exploration, and NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration) decided to pool FY03 funding to move ahead with a full telepresence installation in the Florida Keys and an initial installation in the Channel Islands. In addition, JASON has pledged to repackage 2003 JASON project materials (which took place in the Channel Islands) to support telepresence content at that location. All partners are currently working on a comprehensive MOA to govern implementation of this project. In addition, site mapping of a comprehensive web portal featuring telepresence has begun. This web presence will not only highlight this project (and the NMSP), but serve as a broad portal for marine science generally.

### **Volunteer Programs**

The NMSP is working with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to evaluate existing sanctuary volunteer programs and develop new programs throughout the system. The foundation has contracted with Mary Enstrom who has led The Nature Conservancy's volunteer efforts in Florida. Mary traveled to several sanctuary sites this year to evaluate existing programs and site volunteer needs, and work with sanctuary staff on developing new programs that can be adapted system-wide. The NMSP's goal is to develop a system-wide Team OCEAN concept that can be used as a single marketable concept for the many different types of volunteer programs used in sanctuaries.

### **Other National Programs**

#### **Emergency Preparedness/Response Planning**

Emergency preparedness and contingency planning are a current priority for the NMSP. SHIELDS—the Sanctuaries Hazardous Incident Emergency Logistics Database System—is an intranet system intended to address the need for the NMSP to have improved access to key information and to provide better planning and response for hazardous/emergency situations. This system has been prototyped at two sites (CINMS and OCNMS) and will be expanded to include 5 additional sites (SBNMS, FKNMS,

TBNMS, FGBNMS, GFNMS) this fiscal year. The other aspect of this project is the development of the Resources and Undersea Threats (RUST) database that will be a critical component of SHIELDS that will address a broad range of undersea threats from abandoned wellheads to WWII era vessels. Training will be scheduled for a number of the field sites in the fall of 2003. In addition, NMSP is planning a ecological risk assessment workshop with National Marine Fisheries Service and the Office of Response and Restoration to review the effectiveness and impacts of alternative response technologies such as dispersants and in-situ burning. This will be an effort to develop agency level agreements and where possible, determine whether preapproval may be possible for some Regional Response Teams.

### **Enforcement**

Another program priority is enhanced enforcement capabilities, which becomes increasingly important as site management plans and regulations are strengthened through the management plan review process. An Enforcement Summit is planned for later in 2003, that will bring together NMSP, NOAA's Office for Law Enforcement, and NOAA's Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation to address sanctuary enforcement issues. Staff members are preparing a questionnaire that will be used to survey issues and needs at the sites.

### **Maritime Heritage or Submerged Archaeological Resources**

The NMSP has undertaken a major new initiative for FY03 to establish a new Maritime Archaeological Center (MAC) to enhance exploration, documentation, and management of submerged archaeological resources. Submerged historical and archaeological resources have emerged as a more fundamental part of the NMSP mission in the past few years as evidenced by the establishment of the Thunder Bay Sanctuary, the discovery of the *Portland* in the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary, and the series of successful recovery operations at the *Monitor* Sanctuary. The NMSP is making substantial investments in the documentation of these resources inside and outside the sites over the next two years, having recently completed a West Coast shipwreck database and assessment workshop in Santa Barbara and started planning similar projects for the Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes in the coming months.

Some of the specific projects the NMSP has undertaken this year include:

- *Queen of Nassau* – This early 20th century Canadian fisheries steel patrol ship was found recently in the Florida Keys Sanctuary. The NMSP and its non-governmental partners will be documenting the wreck, removing threatened artifacts, and preparing interpretive material;
- *Portland* – As mentioned above, this and several other significant historic shipwrecks were recently found in the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary; a research cruise is already being planned for later this fiscal year to map, document, and assess the condition of the site. Partners in this effort will include NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Discovery Channel;
- *Monitor* – A very successful salvage operation last summer raised the turret of the

*Monitor*, as well as numerous other artifacts. The conservation of the turret has begun and may take as long as ten to fifteen years to complete; and

- Thunder Bay expeditions – Dr. Robert Ballard and his Institute for Exploration have completed several expeditions to the Thunder Bay Sanctuary/Underwater Preserve. The first expedition in summer 2001 made use of side scan sonar to identify targets for further exploration. The second expedition, made last summer, used remotely operated underwater vehicles mounted with cameras to further explore and document those targets.